

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
IO-13 MCE-00 ACDA-12 AID-05 SAA-01 EUR-12 EB-08
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9810

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 7722

E.O. 11652:GDS
TAGS: MILI, IR
SUBJ: LOSS OF IRANIAN HELICOPTERS

REF: STATE 185578

1. PARAGRAPHS BELOW CONTAIN MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON
SUBJECT TO SUPPLEMENT EARLIER EMBASSY MESSAGES (TEHRAN
6912 OF JULY 23, AND TEHRAN 6962 OF JULY 24).

2. DETAILS OF THE FLIGHT:

A. THE MISSION WAS A LONG-RANGE NAVIGATION TRAINING FLIGHT
OF FOUR CH-47 HELICOPTERS FROM ISFAHAN (HOME BASE) TO
MASHAD, LOCATED IN THE NORTHEAST BORDER REGION OF IRAN
APPROXIMATELY 100 KILOMETERS FROM THE USSR BORDER. THE
INTENDED ROUTE OF FLIGHT WAS DIRECT.

B. THE AIRCRAFT WERE EQUIPPED WITH ADF AND VOR NAVIGATION
AIDS AND APPROPRIATE MAPS AND AERONAUTICAL CHARTS.

C. THE AIRCRAFT HAD QUALIFIED FLIGHT PERSONNEL AND AIR-
CRAFT COMMANDERS ABOARD. SEVERAL OF WHICH WERE INSTRUMENT
QUALIFIED.

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D. AFTER REFUELING AT SHAHRUD, APPROXIMATELY 250 KILO-
METERS SOUTHWEST OF MASHAD, THE FLIGHT COMMANDER SPLIT
THE FLIGHT INTO TWO ELEMENTS OF TWO AIRCRAFT EACH DUE TO
ONE AIRCRAFT HAVING DIFFICULTY MAINTAINING DESIRED AIRSPEED.
BOTH ELEMENTS CLIMBED TO VFR TO AVOID A LAYER OF FOG AND
HAZE AND PROCEEDED TOWARDS MASHAD. THE INTERMEDIATE VOR

BEACON TO BE USED WAS SABZEVAR (FREQ 255), LOCATED MIDWAY BETWEEN SHAHRUD AND MASHAD. ASHKAHBAD VOR (FREQ 257) IS LOCATED IN THE USSR APPROXIMATELY THE SAME DISTANCE FROM SHAHRUD AND ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE DEGREES NORTH NORTHWEST OF THE SABZEVAR VOR. THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT DUE TO THE SMALL DIFFERENCE IN FREQUENCIES THE WRONG FREQUENCY WAS TUNED IN OR THAT MEACONING TOOK PLACE, ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO HARD EVIDENCE OF THIS LATTER FACT. ALL FOUR HELICOPTERS PENETRATED USSR AIRSPACE AND THE TWO LEADING AIRCRAFT APPARENTLY REALIZED THEIR MISTAKE, CHANGED COURSE, AND RCOVERED SAFELY AT MASHAD. THE TRAIL AIRCRAFT WERE INTERCEPTED BY USSR FIGHTER AIRCRAFT PRIOR TO EXITING USSR AIRSPACE AND WERE SHORT DOWN, WITH ONE TOTALLY DESTROYED ALONG WITH CREW AND ONE MAKING A FORCED LANDING DUE TO EXTENSIVE DAMAGE.

3. ACTIONS TAKEN OR BEING TAKEN:

A. A C-130 IIAF AIRCRAFT MADE AN INCURSION INTO USSR AIRSPACE APPROXIMATELY SIX MONTHS AGO, DISCOVERED THEIR ERROR, AND RETURNED SAFELY TO IRANIAN AIRSPACE. FOLLOWING THIS, THE CHIEF, SUPREME COMMANDER'S STAFF (SCS) DIRECTED A DETAILED EXAMINATION OF THE INCIDENT AND FURTHER DIRECTED IMMEDIATE CORRECTIVE ACTON BE TAKEN TO INCLUDE BRIEFING OF AIRCREWS AND REVIEW OF APPLICABLE REGULATIONS FOR ACCURACY. THESE REGULATIONS, WRITTEN SOME YEARS AGO, DO PRESCRIBE
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PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE BUFFER AND ADIZ ZONES.

B. FOLLOWING THE HELICOPTER LOSS, THE CHIEF, SCS, AGAIN DIRECTED A DETAILED REVIEW TO ENSURE THAT APPLICABLE REGULATIONS AND DIRECTIVES WERE BEING FOLLOWED, AND FURTHER DIRECTED THAT THE MAAG PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY TO DETERMINE IF ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS ARE IN ORDER. THIS STUDY IS UNDERWAY. WE ANTICIPATE FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS IN PROCEDURES AND TRAINING. THE IRANIAN MILITARY ARE VERY SENSITIVE TO THIS AND POTENTIAL LOSSES, AND WORKING HARD TO PRECLUDE RECURRENCE.

C. THE CHIEF, SCS HAD EARLIER THIS YEAR DIRECTED THAT SCS HEAD UP AN AIRSPACE COORDINATION COMMITTEE, WHICH WOULD INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SERVICES, THE IRANIAN CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION (CAO), AND THE U.S. FAA REPRESENTATIVE. THIS COMMITTEE WAS FORMED IN APRIL 1978, AND IN JUNE ACHIEVED A FORMAL AGREEMENT ON THE USE OF ISFAHAN AIRSPACE. IT IS PROPOSED THAT THIS SAME GROUP, TO INCLUDE A MEACONING EXPERT, PERFORM A DETAILED STUDY OF THE RECENT BORDER OVERFLIGHT AND MAKE APPROPRIATE RECOMMENDATIONS.

4. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

A. NEITHER IRAN NOR THE USSR CHOSE TO MAKE A LARGE ISSUE OF THIS MATTER; INDEED: A SENSE OF COOPERATION EVOLVED IN THAT THE GOI WAS PERMITTED TO FLY REPAIR PARTS AND MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL TO A BORDER SITE WHERE THEY WERE TRANSPORTED BY USSR GROUND VEHICLES TO THE CRASE SITE. THE IRANIAN REPAIRMEN WERE PERMITTED TO REPAIR THE DAMAGED HELICOPTER, TO INCLUDE CANNIBALIZING PARTS FROM THE DESTROYED HELICOPTER. REPAIRS WERE COMPLETED WITHIN TWO DAYS AND PERMISSION WAS GRANTED TO FLY THE AIRCRAFT BACK TO IRAN. THE AIRCRAFT IS NOW LOCATED AT ITS HOME BASE (ISFAHAN) UNDERGOING FINAL REPAIRS.

B. NO U.S. CLASSIFIED COMPONENTS, OR HIGH TECHNOLOGY COMPONENTS NOT PREVIOUSLY AVAILABLE TO THE USSR VIA CONFIDENTIAL

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VIETNAM, WERE ABOARD THE AIRCRAFT.
NAAS

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